

~~SECRET~~

NSC BRIEFING

14 December 1953

WORLD REACTION TO PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S UN ADDRESS

The restrained handling of the President's proposal by Soviet media indicates that the Kremlin is avoiding an advance commitment as to the nature of its official response.

The initial negative attitude of Radio Moscow commentators is in contrast with the careful Soviet press treatment and the Soviet Foreign Ministry's announcement that the government would give the President's proposal serious attention.

Polish and Hungarian government officials also have indicated interest in the speech and have promised to give it thoughtful and careful study.

Communist:

USSR:

Soviet authorities have stated that they could not comment until the text had been studied.

Vyshinsky, while he did not comment on the content of the President's speech, criticized what he chose to call an omission -- the banning of atomic weapons.

Pravda published an 800-word summary of the speech. It was essentially fair in that it included the essence of the American proposals. However, it made no mention of the references to the US atomic potential and through the very process of summarization destroyed to some extent the effect which the

~~SECRET~~

reading of the entire speech produces.

Pravda's only comment was contained in the final sentence which said:

"However, in his speech President Eisenhower did not express his attitude on the question of the prohibition of atomic armaments."

TASS transmitted a summary of the speech -- apparently the one published in Pravda.

Moscow's four leading newspapers, with the exception of Pravda, suspended publication on 10 December. No reason was given. Western observers believe that these papers may have contained unfavorable comment and that a last-minute change in the official Communist line necessitated their suspension. The next editions carried Pravda's original remark that the President did not express his attitude toward previous Soviet atomic proposals.

In summarizing foreign press comment on the proposal, the Soviet press gave the majority of space to negative reactions although citing some positive comments.

The two initial Radio Moscow commentaries have been repeated several times. They have not, however, been beamed to the Soviet home audience.

Leontyev, considered the leading foreign

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

affairs commentator of Radio Moscow, commented on the speech in the last two paragraphs of his lengthy attack on the joint Bermuda communique. He charged that:

- 1) Like the Bermuda communique, Eisenhower's "belligerent speech" evidenced no desire on the part of the Western powers, particularly the US, to lessen world tension;
- 2) "Eisenhower actually came out with a threat of atomic warfare;
- 3) He praised the "policy of force";
- 4) He pursued a "new version of the same old Baruch plan which repudiates the need to ban atomic weapons and enforce strict control over the enforcement of the ban."

Orlov, a Radio Moscow commentator of lesser importance who usually handles material to be beamed to North America, attacked the speech at greater length. This commentary, however, has been beamed only to North America.

He asserted that:

- 1) The address lacked concrete proposals (for peace among nations);
- 2) If the President proved to be so familiar with the terrifying destructiveness of the atom bomb, he should realize the need

- 3 - **SECRET**

SECRET

for outlawing atom and hydrogen bombs
urgently and unconditionally;

- 3) Eisenhower carefully evaded any mention
of Soviet atomic proposals;
- 4) He gave no explanation as to why US dele-
gates in the United Nations so stubbornly
oppose the Soviet proposals;
- 5) He wanted to scare his listeners with
atomic war;
- 6) His words really could be applauded if
and when actions are made to fit the words.

On 12 December, the Moscow press and
radio released the following announcement:

"On Decmeber 7 US Ambassador Bohlen
visited Minister of Foreign Affairs Molotov
and informed him of a statement forth-
coming on December 8 by President Eisenhower
in the UN General Assembly devoted to the
question of atomic weapons. Referring to
instructions of his government the Ambassa-
dor requested that attention be given the
proposals which would be contained in the
speech by the President of the United States.

"Thanking the Ambassador for this in-
formation Molotov stated that the question
of atomic weapons was an extremely impor-
tant question and that the Soviet Govern-

SECRET

SECRET

ment would treat the speech of the President of the United States on that question with all seriousness as it had done previously on similar occasions.

"On December 9 in a letter addressed to Molotov, Bohlen transmitted excerpts from the above-mentioned speech of President Eisenhower."

Poland:

Michalowski, Acting Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs, expressed appreciation for the copy of the address and said that the government would give thoughtful and careful study to the President's proposal. He added that his government is deeply interested in efforts to bring about disarmament and abolition of destructive instruments of war.

The Polish press carried the TASS summary of the speech, and excerpts of unfavorable Western press comment.

Hungary:

Foreign Office official Berei expressed interest in the speech and said he understood the importance of its implications. He said that Hungary was vitally concerned over the issue.

The press carried the TASS version of the address and commented editorially on the long-standing differences between US and Soviet atomic

SECRET 5 -

SECRET

is based on the Baruch plan intended to establish a US monopoly on atomic weapons, and has as a goal the establishment of an agency for espionage and diversionist activities against the Soviet Union.

East Germany: East Berlin radio and press comments continue to label the President's proposal a "declaration of bankruptcy of American atom bomb diplomacy." -- proof that the US had to yield to a world-wide demand for elimination of the atomic menace.

France: Communist Humanite featured this message allegedly telephoned by its Moscow correspondent: "From a usually well informed source it is learned here that Eisenhower's UN speech was received with interest by Soviet circles and that it is considered here that the speech requires careful examination."

SECRET

SECRET

Western:

Yugoslavia: When Ambassador Riddleberger presented the text of the President's address to the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Popovic expressed such interest that he went into a long discussion of the speech and atomic energy problems. The first half of the conversation was devoted to the theoretical background of atomic development, including consideration of such subjects as the development of Riemann's and Lobashevsky's geometry and Einstein's formula on the relation of matter to energy.

His initial reaction to the speech was that the approach was well conceived and that he understood the necessity for careful controls. He added that he was glad to hear that the proposal was not immutable and that it should serve as a good basis for discussion. But he wanted to reflect upon all the implications of the offer.

He felt that the Soviet Union would refuse the offer if it is far behind the United States in atomic development as the USSR would be reluctant to expose this fact or to admit ignorance in the presence of others. He also believes that the USSR would raise the

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

question of their contribution of fissionable material.

The first Yugoslav press comment highlighted the "extraordinary reaction of the international public," but ascribed the timing of the offer to requirements of the President's domestic and foreign policy. The proposal was described as "essentially human and feasible."

Western Europe: In Western Europe official reaction to the President's speech was notable mainly by its absence, except in specific instances where inquiries from the American embassy brought forth belated statements. The responses elicited were overwhelmingly favorable, and the reservations expressed concerned various practical aspects of the plan, mainly the likelihood of the Soviet Union's co-operation. Press reaction was generally favorable with the intensity of enthusiasm decreasing from right to left. The conservative rightist papers were highly favorable, the Socialist press was more critical and fearful of Soviet reaction, and the communist press pooh-poohed the whole idea without expressing actual hostility to it.

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

In Rome the American embassy marked certain passages of the speech which it brought to the attention of the Italian Foreign Office, whereupon Premier Pella, at the conclusion of his foreign policy speech to the Italian Senate on December 10, associated the Italian Government fully with President Eisenhower's views on atomic energy control.

French Foreign Minister Bidault, also in response to prodding from the American embassy in Paris, indicated on 11 December full agreement with the President's proposal although mildly concerned lest the smallness of the French atomic contribution make any dramatic acceptance appear ridiculous. Premier Laniel's earlier speech on the Bermuda Conference made no mention of the A-Bomb speech.

Comparatively few West German political leaders expressed themselves on the President's address, although what reaction there was appeared overwhelmingly to support it.

In Spain and Portugal, there was no official comment, although the government-controlled press, which reflects the official view in both countries, endorsed the speech.

SECRET

SECRET

British officials added no comment beyond what was 'presumably made beforehand at Bermuda.

Latin America: The one official and the comparatively few press reactions which have been reported to date have been favorable, the reservations expressed being on the likelihood of the Soviet Union's cooperating. Following the speech, Peru's UN delegate considered introducing a resolution thanking President Eisenhower.

One unusual reaction may be indicated by the pro-Communist El Popular of Mexico, the organ of WFTU leader Lombardo Toledano's Popular Party, which published the speech with the banner headline "New and Sensational Language in Favor of Peace." Whatever the text of El Popular's article may indicate, the generally favorable headline would not necessarily reflect the official Communist line, since certain disagreements regarding political strategy currently separate the Popular Party and the Mexican Communist Party.

- 10 -
SECRET

SECRET

Far Eastern: Throughout the non-Communist Far East, President Eisenhower's speech was given extensive press coverage and was uniformly well-received. The Chinese Communist radio has been silent, as has the North Korean radio except for one commentary before the speech which denounced it in advance as an effort "to maintain world tension."

Japan: Initial press reaction is described as "uniformly favorable, even enthusiastic," and is believed to have made a strong appeal to the imagination of the Japanese.

The speech is said to have greatly overshadowed the Bermuda conference whose results were termed "disappointing." Preliminary information on the initial press reaction to the early Soviet reply indicates great disappointment and support of the American viewpoint. There has been no official comment.

Communist China: The pro-Communist Chinese press in Hong Kong, apparently taking its cue from the first Soviet commentary, discussed the speech unfavorably, noting that it did not call for the outright prohibition of atomic weapons.

Nationalist China: Chinese Nationalist President Chiang Kai-shek, in conversation with American

SECRET

SECRET

officials, described the speech as "exactly what the President should have said ...; a good speech." Chiang's comment contrasts with early Nationalist comment, as reported by the press, that the speech was evidence of American "appeasement" of the USSR.

Southeast Asia: In Southeast Asia, the president's speech was well received. Even in neutralist Indonesia, spokesmen for the Minister of Foreign Affairs were quoted as regarding the proposals as extremely important. However, they stressed the essentiality, on the part of the countries concerned, of a sincere desire to cooperate if the proposals were to become meaningful.

In Burma, the speech was given extensive press coverage, but so far there is very little editorial comment. Complete confusion in the leftist press is reported. The embassy believes that favorable editorial opinion is likely and that it may create a new climate for the US in Burma, tinged, however, with suspicion and a "wait and see" attitude.

SECRET

SECRET

South Asia: Official and press comment from South Asia has been uniformly favorable, the speech being described as of great constructive value and as clearing the way for better East-West understanding.

There has been no government reaction from India, Pakistan, or Afghanistan, but comments of UN representatives from India and Pakistan were laudatory. The prime minister of Ceylon expressed a personal interest.

The press of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon received the speech with enthusiasm, the Indian press particularly giving it unusually favorable treatment and playing down the pessimism it ordinarily displays about the implementation of such plans. There has as yet been no report from Afghanistan.

Arab States: Arab comment to date has varied from laudatory statements (Lebanon particularly) to limited reaction or even lack of comment (possibly deliberate in the case of Egypt). At the United Nations, delegates from Lebanon, Syria and Iraq have commented favorably. There has been no official reaction in the capitals of the Arab States or Israel. As suggested by the US Embassy in Beirut, the

SECRET 13

SECRET

subject is too remote for most Arabs, who are more interested in grant aid.

Israel has given considerable press coverage to the speech text and to both East and West reaction. The few Israeli editorials tend to be skeptical of the chances of the proposal.

Greece, Turkey, and Iran: In Greece and Turkey, considerable interest and favorable comment on the speech has been evident. There has been no official or press reaction from Iran as yet.

The only official reaction yet noted is from Greece, where it has been pointed out that the USSR now has a great chance to demonstrate its peaceful intentions and where there are hopes that the plan will be accepted quickly by all.

The press in both Greece and Turkey expressed skepticism as to whether the USSR would adopt President Eisenhower's suggestions despite their undoubtedly peaceful nature.

Africa: South Africa's UN delegate Jooste was most enthusiastic. Otherwise there has been no official or semi-official reaction from capitals of the continent. A leading newspaper in Southern Rhodesia, which often reflects

SECRET

government opinion, comments that the appeal was worth making and that it would be difficult for the Soviet Union to ignore the new approach but that it was doubtful if it would accept the proposal. Reporting from Africa is slow. No other comments are available.